WORLD TRADE CENTER EXPERT TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL
RECAP: MARCH 1-AUGUST 31, 2004

- The panel has met five times in open meetings to interact with EPA and the public on plans to monitor for the presence of WTC dust in indoor environments and to suggest additional evaluations that could be undertaken by EPA and others to evaluate the dispersion of the plume and the geographic extent of environmental impact from the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

- The panel was charged, in part, with reviewing data from post-cleaning verification sampling to be done by EPA in the residential areas included in EPA's Indoor Air Cleanup and to verify that recontamination has not occurred from central heating and air conditioning systems.

- With the assistance of Westat, a contractor in the field of statistics, EPA developed a sampling plan to evaluate whether apartments previously cleaned in EPA's Region 2 clean and test program had become recontaminated.

- The EPA proposed plan was debated by the panel, and most panel members believed that an alternate study to test for "contamination" rather than "recontamination" should be conducted instead.

- Using a peer review contract, EPA solicited expert comment from non-panel experts on the use of asbestos as a surrogate for determining risk from other contaminants and provided a report on those comments back to the panel. The external reviewers generally supported the use of asbestos as a surrogate, but encouraged the concurrent testing for lead.

- Many members of the panel did not support the position that asbestos was an appropriate surrogate in determining risk for other contaminants, and instead discussions have led to the concept that a WTC signature exists in dust and that sampling could focus on determining the presence of that signature, as well as the levels of contaminants of potential concern. That signature has been identified in numerous outdoor dust samples, and efforts are underway to confirm its presence in the indoor environment.

- The panel is reviewing the ongoing work by the federal, state and local governments and private entities to determine the characteristics of the WTC dust plume and where it was dispersed, including the geographic extent of EPA and other entities' monitoring and testing, and recommending any additional evaluations for consideration by EPA and other public agencies.

- Presentations by and to the panel have shed some light on the characteristics of the plume. Panel member Dr. Paul Lioy stressed the importance of understanding the distinction between contaminants in dust that resulted from the collapse of the towers and contaminants in dust that arose from the fire plume and presented data

on PAH presence in WTC dust. Dr. Lung Chi Chen of New York University presented a talk on particulate characteristics of the plume from the fires at Ground Zero. Based on these talks and other data, many on the panel have recommended that EPA do further testing for all identified contaminants of potential concern in an area that goes beyond Canal Street.

- EPA developed an alternate sampling plan to evaluate the presence and levels of contaminants of potential concern in buildings in lower Manhattan, including contaminants that could be markers for WTC dust. A primary objective of this study will be to determine the geographic extent of WTC dust, and plans call for sampling beyond Canal Street to as far north as Houston Street in lower Manhattan. To the extent possible, the sampling results will also be used to determine the geographic extent and impact of the fire plume residues.

- Panel members have had the benefit of public participation, through two comment periods during each of the meetings. Members of the panel have spent time listening to community concerns about the indoor environment and have worked to establish better lines of communication with the community. This has resulted in the formation of the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) effort.

- Presentations have been made to the panel by EPA, by panel members and by invited speakers. Topics have included: EPA Region 2's clean and test program; EPA's proposed sampling plans; results of the external comment on the asbestos-as-surrogate issue; asbestos sampling methods, particulate matter and PAH data and exposures; HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) testing; the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) research grant program; and the activities and plans of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation with regard to disposition of the Deutsche Bank Building.

- A Web site was created which provides information on upcoming meetings, agendas and notes from meetings, background documents, presentations and other handouts made public during the meetings, contact information and other information pertinent to the activities of the panel.

- The panel has set up a number of subgroups that discuss topics of specific interest. These subgroups include a WTC signature workgroup, a data gathering workgroup and a public participation workgroup.

- The WTC signature workgroup prepared a topic paper outlining the key characteristics of a WTC signature in dust.

- EPA is preparing a study plan to validate the existence of a WTC signature by analyzing archived indoor samples as well as by conducting current day sampling of buildings still believed to contain remnants of World Trade Center dust, and also to sample background buildings to confirm that this signature is not present in "unimpacted" buildings.

- The community participation workgroup met several times. Through a contractual mechanism, EPA is providing a community-based participatory research (CBPR) facilitator and technical experts to work with the lower Manhattan community to provide a formal mechanism for community input into the planning and design of project protocols and research.

- The data collection workgroup has identified specific sets of data which may be of use to the panel and has requested that EPA attempt to gather the data.

- The panel chair and vice-chair have briefed staff from interested Members of Congress twice on the panel's activities.

For more information, visit www.epa.gov/wtc/panel